DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 711 IR 003 181

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TITLE Summary of the Formative Evaluation Report of Self Incorporated Programs.
INSTITUTION Agency for Instructional Television, Bloomington, Ind.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 17p.; For related documents see IR 003 025 and 182; This is an abridged version of IR 003 182
AVAILABLE FROM Agency for Instructional Television, Box A, Bloomington, Indiana 47401

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Curriculum Evaluation; *Educational Television; Emotional Adjustment; *Formative Evaluation; Junior High Schools; Junior High School Students; Program Evaluation; Programing (Broadcast); Student Attitudes; *Television Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS *Self Incorporated Programs

ABSTRACT

Self Incorporated is a 15-program television/film series designed to stimulate classroom discussion of problems and issues of early adolescence. This document provides an overall summary of a formative evaluation project and summary results of the evaluations of each of eight programs in the series. (CH)

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SUMMARY

OF THE

FORMATIVE EVALUATION REPORT

OF

SELF INCORPORATED PROGRAMS

by

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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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"Self Incorporated" was developed through the resources of a consortium of forty-two educational and broadcasting agencies in the United States and Canada. The consortium, organized and managed by the Agency for Instructional Television, consists of the following agencies:

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Illinois Office of Education and Southern Illinois Instructional Television Association
Indiana State Board of Health
Iowa Drug Abuse Authority/Iowa Educational Broadcasting Network
Kansas State Department of Education
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Louisiana State Department of Education
Maine Health Education Consortium
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Michigan Office of Health and Medical Affairs
Mississippi Authority for Educational Television
Missouri State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Montana Consortium: "Self Incorporated"
Nebraska Department of Education, ITV Services
Nevada Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse/Nevada State Department of Education
New Hampshire Department of Education
New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority
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Oregon State Department of Education and Oregon Association of Intermediate and County Superintendents
Pennsylvania Department of Education
South Carolina State Department of Education
South Dakota ITV, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Tennessee State Department of Education
Texas Education Agency
Utah State Board of Education, Curriculum Division
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Washington State Instructional Television Consortium
State of Wisconsin, Educational Communications Board
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The Agency for Instructional Television is a nonprofit American-Canadian organization established in 1973 to strengthen education through television and other technologies. Its primary function is the development of joint program projects involving state and provincial agencies. It also acquires, adapts, and distributes a wide variety of television, audiovisual, and related printed materials for use as major learning resources. AIT's predecessor organization, National Instructional Television, was founded in 1962. The AIT main offices are in Bloomington, Indiana. There are regional offices in the Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Milwaukee, and San Francisco areas.

Copies of the *Formative Evaluation of Self Incorporated Programs* are available for purchase. For information, please write AIT, Box A, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

SUMMARY

This report presents the formative evaluation activities of "Self Incorporated," a 15-program television/film series. "Self Incorporated" is designed to stimulate classroom discussion of critical issues and problems of early adolescence. It aims at helping 11- to 13-year-olds cope with the physical, social, and emotional changes they are experiencing. "Self Incorporated" was created under the management of the Agency for Instructional Television through the resources of a consortium of 42 state and provincial educational and broadcasting agencies, with additional assistance from Exxon Corporation.

The formative evaluation of "Self Incorporated" was conducted in two phases. The first phase obtained student and teacher reactions to program concepts, script ideas, scripts, and parts of completed programs. This pre-production evaluation was conducted by local evaluation consultants working with each of the three production agencies and by the scriptwriters themselves. It served, in part, to confirm the scriptwriters' ideas, to generate salient examples of action and dialogue from the audience, and to stimulate questions for field testing. All 15 "Self Incorporated" programs were evaluated by the local consultants in conjunction with the writers/producers/directors.

The second phase of evaluation involved an extensive field test of eight of the tentatively completed programs. The programs were evaluated in the "answer-print" stage and were subject to revision based on evaluation results prior to the programs' release by AIT.

The "Self Incorporated" formative evaluation was designed to provide information to production personnel for their decisions regarding each program. The field test data was used to help the executive producer and content consultant determine whether a program was lacking in production and/or content quality. In addition, the evaluation procedures provided the staffs of each production agency with opportunities for gaining insights into audience reactions.

Eight of the "Self Incorporated" programs were evaluated in this phase. Time--for testing and revision--did not permit more of the programs to undergo field testing. Thus, what was learned from the field tests of the first eight programs was applied to the writing and production of the remaining seven.

Members of the "Self Incorporated" consortium assisted in the field testing by obtaining the participation of classrooms, providing observers, and collecting the prescribed evaluation data. The field tests were conducted at 25 sites in 16 states. More than 5,600 students in 225 classrooms participated.

Observers for the field test sites were trained by AIT and showed individual television programs in classrooms to obtain data on: 1) students' visual attention to the programs; 2) students' comprehension of the program content and their attitudes about the characters and concepts covered; 3) the classroom discussion process that usually followed the viewing of the programs; and 4) the teachers' opinions and attitudes concerning each program and the concept of the series.

These data were then returned to AIT by the observers, analyzed, and subsequently reported to the executive producer, the content consultant, and other production personnel. They were also provided to those developing the teacher's guide and in-service workshop materials.

Results of the field test

In general, the programs were effective with the student audiences. The viewers were highly attentive to the programs; with certain correctable exceptions, they were able to comprehend the material in the programs. The post-viewing discussions involved the students in the issues, although a large portion of the discussion period was devoted to reviewing and clarifying the on-screen events. Several of the programs required and received production modifications to clarify or enhance student comprehension. A number of other problems generated by the programs required and received special attention in the teacher's guide to facilitate improved classroom use.

Teachers liked the concept of "Self Incorporated" and indicated their desire to use more programs in the series. They reported that the programs involved their classes and helped in discussions of the issues covered by the series. The programs in the field test were reported to result in successful classroom lessons by almost every teacher. Nevertheless, some of the programs, being particularly sensitive, seemed to cause the teachers to be uncomfortable, and the evaluation results suggest the need for special preparation prior to teachers' extensive

use of the series. Both the teacher's guide and the in-service materials should attend to these teacher concerns.

As a result of the extensive field test data, a number of generalizations and speculations can be made about the audience and about various aspects of the production of the "Self Incorporated" series:

1) Film techniques (intercuts) used to move the linear story line to events in the past or to fantasy sequences were not universally perceived or understood by the students. Traditional video and audio special effects seemed to be needed to help students make these transitions.
2) All-talk/no-action and no-talk/no-action (i.e., slow-moving, "mood" creating) sequences reduced the level of attention to the screen and can interfere with comprehension of the program's content.
3) Students from various racial groups had no trouble identifying with and empathizing with program characters of the same or different races. The events and issues were more important than racial characteristics.
4) The audience exhibited an age-related reluctance to rebel or to express non-conformist values. The younger part of the audience tended to offer responses which would conform to adult requests, but older students, 13 and above, were more likely to support rebellious solutions.

5) Teachers in junior high and middle schools avoided making personal references in the post-viewing discussion and stressed the abstract and conceptual aspect of the issues raised by the programs. They moved the discussion away from the personal revelations that students wished to provide. This contrasts to the more personalized approaches of elementary school teachers who use series such as "Inside/Out." In-service activities and teacher's guide materials may be needed to help junior high teachers more fully utilize affective material such as "Self Incorporated."

In summary, the programs were well-received by the students and the teachers and likely to result in worthwhile classroom lessons.

The following pages contain summaries of the field test results for the eight "Self Incorporated" programs undergoing this part of the evaluation. In reading these summaries, it is important to remember that these field tests were designed to improve existing programs and to help prepare for more effective future programs. Problem areas and program strong points both are specifically reviewed. Program production modifications were made and specific teacher's guide materials were included after the executive producer and chief content consultant had reviewed these data.

These individual program summaries appear in the order in which the programs were evaluated. The complete report covers them in greater detail.

SUMMARY

"TRYING TIMES"

"Trying Times" is designed to help students recognize and deal with group pressure and to help them understand the forces that affect their decision making.

This program was field tested in 28 classrooms in 4 sites in the United States. A total of 532 students participated.

Attention to the program remained relatively high throughout the entire 15-minute period. Two all-talk/no-action sequences depress viewer attention--the early discussion in Meg's room and Roger's anti-smoking message. This diminution was not extensive, however.

Viewers generally perceived that the program was about social pressure and its influence on decision making. Students exhibited awareness of both identification and compliance as processes underlying the group pressure for conformity. They usually saw censure, either verbal or physical, as a consequence of not conforming. From the post-viewing discussion, it is evident that students were able to go beyond the smoking and drinking shown in the program and see them as examples of many decisions that must be made under pressure from others.

The two main characters are perceived as extremes and opposites. One is good and pure; the other is evil and bad. This stereotypic reaction to "Trying Times" may not be desirable. It tends to lead the students to perceive people who relent to peer pressure as "bad" on all accounts. The teacher's guide should include something to help teachers mitigate this effect. Roger, the older brother, is appealing to girls in the audience and is a good vehicle for the anti-smoking, anti-peer pressure message. A brother can get away with a lecture that parents could not.

There is a moral reaction by many viewers to smoking, drinking, and lying. This did not interfere with student understanding of the major concepts. The concept of initiation rites was not perceived by the viewers.

Post-viewing discussions averaged 14 minutes and were primarily program-oriented. Students began to incorporate their own experiences in the discussion towards the end, although personal expression remained a minor part throughout. These discussions were more student-directed than were those following other programs in the field test.

Recommendations for "Trying Times" do not include changes in the program itself. Material to be included in the teacher's guide should deal with the problems of stereotypic perceptions of characters.

SUMMARY

"PRESSURE MAKES PERFECT"

"Pressure Makes Perfect" is designed to help adolescents recognize pressure to achieve, to explore the effects of pressure, and to learn ways of coping with it.

This program was field tested in 26 classrooms at 5 sites. A total of 676 students participated in this evaluation.

Although attention to the program was generally high, two problems appeared. First, the opening segment does not grab attention; it gradually gains it. Because of the fantasy sequences in the beginning, this initial inattention reduced comprehension and increased confusion. Second, the long piano practice sequence in the middle quickly loses student interest and could be shortened without loss.

The concept is seen as pressure to achieve (play, perform) and not primarily as parental pressure. Students report a highly traditional view of the relationship between Nan and the adult community. Rebellion is neither a satisfactory nor acceptable coping mechanism to these students. The aggressive resolution at the end of the recital causes discomfort; it is enjoyable but consciously rejected as a model.

Nan and her mother are perceived in sharp contrast; most of the respondents take the parental point of view as correct, although they are able to generate a variety of coping mechanisms for dealing with the problems Nan faces.

The many fantasy sequences are ambiguous and confusing and cause comprehension problems. The technique of intercutting reality and fantasy, without using special effects or music to help the audience distinguish between them, may be too sophisticated to use with this audience. The dialogue between Nan and her classroom teacher about career choices is neither heard nor comprehended by most of the viewers because of poor sound quality.

Post-viewing discussions averaged 11 minutes and were heavily program-oriented. Teachers also emphasized "Others/Concepts" and "Alternatives." Students began with some self-involvement but it decreases significantly over time; alternatives remain high throughout the discussion.

Recommendations for this program include a number of changes in the program itself, both because of audio problems and because of the confusion in the fantasy sequences.

SUMMARY

"WHAT'S WRONG WITH JONATHAN?"

"What's Wrong With Jonathan?" is designed to encourage young people to recognize daily pressures and to provide them with opportunities for learning skills to deal with them.

This program was field tested in 29 classrooms in 5 sites. A total of 769 students participated.

Attention levels were high, and no specific scene or segment of the program could be isolated as weak in this area.

Jonathan is perceived either as a boy who had a bad day or as a bad boy who precipitated most of the minor catastrophes that befell him. This dichotomy is accentuated in the discussion. Classes that discussed the bad day concept dealt more with the choices, decisions, and coping skills necessary to adjust to such a day. In classes which treated Jonathan as a bad boy, discussion centered on Jonathan's personality and not on coping mechanisms.

The events of the program are well-received and understood. A variety of coping skills were generated by the viewers. This audience might not yet be ready for active teenage rebellion; they seek to talk out problems rather than aggressively confront them.

The opening and closing sequences are not especially well-acted --adults see Jonathan as a poor actor, children see the parents as stilted and weak. What's more, some viewers misperceive Jonathan as punished by being told to study. This is seen as a vindictive act and not as the last straw.

Recommendations for this program include a revision of the first and last scenes; other minor production problems are of little concern. The teacher's guide should also strengthen the "bad day" concept and play down the "bad boy" notion.

SUMMARY

"GETTING CLOSER"

"Getting Closer" is designed to help students understand that anxiety and concern about interacting with persons of the other sex are important and universal and to assist them in coping successfully with those feelings.

This program was field tested in 30 classrooms in 6 sites. There were 784 students involved.

Attention to "Getting Closer" was very high, 96%. Two sharp drops were obviously responses to program events that caused students to look at one another in reaction. The first is when Greg throws a football at Louie's door; the second is when Greg's sister catches him practicing for the dance.

For student viewers, this is a very successful program, although its moments of personal revelation and intimacy may cause discomfort and titters of recognition. Greg's shyness is seen as the central problem. The viewers note the numerous attempts to cope with interpersonal problems. They identified readily with the attributes of each of the four main characters.

Fantasy scenes caused almost no problems. Hugging Laura at football practice seems to have had a significant impact on the viewers. Students exhibited a sophisticated understanding of the death sequence and of the social functions of playing cards.

One production problem was a scene at the dance when another boy comments on the condition of Greg's shirt. The dialogue is inaudible and the visual contrast is not sharp; they interact and cause confusion.

Teachers find this a sensitive program and rate it difficult to handle in the classroom. It should not be one of the first programs used in the series.

Much of the discussion was spent generating alternative endings or options for the actors' behaviors. Post-viewing discussion was exceptionally long--an average of 15 minutes. Teacher behavior changes from "Program Only" to "Others/Concepts." The student discussion follows the same pattern only a few minutes later.

Recommendations for "Getting Closer" include changing the armpit scene, and having a word of encouragement for teachers in the guide to the effect that students find this program very appealing and enjoyable.

SUMMARY

"NO TRESPASSING"

"No Trespassing" is designed to stimulate discussion about an individual's need for privacy and to help young people cope with their feelings when they are denied opportunities for privacy.

This program was field tested in 32 classrooms in 6 sites. A total of 798 students participated in this evaluation project.

"No Trespassing" elicited a high and consistent rate of attention. No particular scenes or events significantly reduced this attention level.

Viewers perceived a variety of privacy problems illustrated in this program. They perceived Alex's attempt to deal with his problems as inadequate and were able to generate an expanded list of options for resolving specific privacy issues. Different coping mechanisms were created for resolving Alex's problems with each of his protagonists.

The opening scene is confusing. It seems to have no context for the action and is reported to be too long. However, this scene does not confuse or detract from the program.

Privacy is a salient issue in the lives of the viewers. The problems that were important to Alex were also important to the students, e.g., a place to be alone. That the actors were black had no effect on student reaction.

Post-viewing discussion was heavily teacher-directed, probably because of the teachers' inexperience with television. "Program Only" discussion was flat and remained high for the entire discussion period. Students were very much personally involved in the discussion and reported numerous personal experiences.

Recommendations for "No Trespassing" include limited modification of the long chase scene in the beginning.

SUMMARY

"FAMILY MATTERS"

"Family Matters" is designed to assist students to recognize and understand the family characteristics that promote the well-being of family members and to help them improve their own skills as family members.

This program was field tested in 20 classrooms in 4 sites in the United States. There were 496 students participating.

Attention to the program was generally high but dropped off for two completely no-action sequences. One is when Andy walks by the water and the second is when she dials the telephone in real time. Neither one of these is a critical problem.

Viewers seem to have comprehended the specifics of Andy's problems, identified her needs within the concept of family, and listed various actions she undertook to resolve her intrafamily dilemma. Students' perceptions of "Family Matters" would have to include three important concepts: 1) the divorce was robbing Andy of the love and attention of both her parents; 2) Andy had been trying and would continue to try to reunite her parents; 3) there was great discomfort and embarrassment at her parents' arguing in public. A variety of coping mechanisms suggested by students centered around these three concepts.

Each of the characters is seen as selfish in his or her own way by many of the students. Each is also an active manipulator of the other. None of the characters evoked a great deal of sympathy.

The flashbacks were perceived and understood by all viewers and no particular production problems arose.

Post-viewing discussions averaged about 11 minutes and primarily consisted of discussion about the program itself. Teachers and students felt uncomfortable with the topic and were unwilling to offer their own personal experiences. The program may be perceived as sensitive if only because its topic has not been openly discussed before.

Recommendations for "Family Matters" include minor changes in the program itself and an emphasis in the teacher's guide on ways for teachers to use this program effectively in their classes. Special prompting may be required.

SUMMARY

"MY FRIEND"

"My Friend" is designed to assist each person in understanding the need for a personal racial or ethnic identity and to help him or her appreciate the qualities that are common to all human beings.

This program was field tested in 35 classrooms in 5 sites in the United States. A total of 910 students participated. Attention to this program was relatively high. In 2 instances it significantly diminished. One of these was an all-talk/no-action scene in which Eddie and his father discuss the decisions that have to be made regarding friendship with Virgil. Attention also diminished in a long scene of outdoor beauty during which Virgil and Eddie discuss the potential problems they would face in school. In this instance, many students may have turned and related to one another in reaction to what they saw on the screen. In neither case was this diminution of attention considered significant.

Viewers of "My Friend" understood the complex friendship that existed between the two boys; they understood the potential for change moving from elementary to secondary school. Students saw legitimate reasons for both boys to be concerned about the continuation of their friendship. Many of the students reported similar dilemmas in their own lives.

Many of the cultural differences between the whites and Navajos were explored and perceived. Virgil's difficulties were thought to be complicated by the traditional views held by his parents. The concluding scene was perceived primarily as sarcastic by the viewers. They held very ambiguous notions about the possibilities for Virgil and Eddie continuing their friendship.

Students could identify with both of the characters and had little difficulty in understanding their motivations. Rural children had the easiest time in identifying with the characters and events of the program. However, urban and inner-city students were equally adept at perceiving and dealing with the problems raised by this program.

The discussion following this program was one of the shortest of the 8 programs evaluated, lasting approximately 10 minutes. Most of the discussions fell into the "Program Only" category for both students and teachers. Analysis of the narrative running accounts indicated that much of the discussion included a comparison of the 2 cultures and their beliefs and customs. The discussions also indicated that students and teachers were able to generalize from the Navajo/white problem to the black/white problems present in their own communities.

Recommendations for "My Friend" do not include changes in the program itself. Material to be incorporated into the teacher's guide should include conflict resolution techniques appropriate for teachers to use in class.

SUMMARY

"TWO SONS"

"Two Sons" is designed to demonstrate that the identity of a child as a good child or a bad child has advantages and disadvantages--that this is a common condition often developing unconsciously and without malicious intent in many families and groups.

This program was field tested in 25 classrooms in 5 sites in the United States. There were a total of 608 students included. Attention to this program remained relatively high throughout the entire 15 minutes. Although this program was divided between all-talk/no-action sequences in the car, and flashbacks and fantasies from Greg's mind, combined in the intercutting of the two, it maintained a high level of attention. There is no scene or segment that results in an attention problem.

This program was analyzed for: 1) viewer comprehension of the scenes and events and their temporal order; 2) the perception of the four main characters; and 3) viewer mood and affect as a result of the program.

Students perceived the intrafamily communication problems and the sibling rivalry illustrated in the program. Character motivations were understood and a variety of alternative coping mechanisms were generated for Greg's behaviors. Certain scenes, especially flashbacks, were not uniformly understood by the students. The card playing scene stands out as one that was completely confusing to both teachers and students. Determining the temporal order of program events caused a problem for many.

Each of the four main characters is seen as complex and extremely different from each other. The father's negativism can be contrasted with the mother's nurturance. Greg's immaturity and confusion can be contrasted with Jim's projection of the "good child" image. The good child/bad child concept is paralleled by the good parent/bad parent concept.

Viewers are relieved when the program is over and are pessimistic about the potential for family change. This feeling of hopelessness is pervasive and strong. There is no question that the program has an effect on the viewer's mood.

Post-viewing discussions were short, approximately 10 minutes, and were primarily about the program itself. Much of the discussion consisted of attempts at explanation by the teacher of program events that were not clearly understood by the students.

Recommendations for "Two Sons" include a number of changes within the program itself, with special emphasis given to the teacher's guide in helping both teachers and students understand the program events and helping them deal with the reactions generated by the program.

AIT RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

This publications list includes research reports from AIT and its predecessor organizations, NITL, NCSCT, and NIT. Most of these reports were distributed widely. However, some were written for internal documentation and are generally unavailable to a larger audience. Many of the out-of-print reports (marked with an asterisk) are available through the ERIC system. Other materials may be obtained from AIT and from the ERIC system (ED numbers are included for such reports).

The Evaluation of Instructional Television. NITL, December 1963.*

The Status of Instructional Television. NITL, March 1964.*

*An Assessment of Instructional Television: 1966-1968.** (ED 083 800)

Instructional Television in Art Education
Instructional Television in Music Education
Instructional Television in Foreign Language Education
Television in Health and Physical Education
Television in Language Arts Education
Television in Mathematics Education
Television in Science Education
Television in Social Studies Education

Television in Higher Education: Social Work Education. NCSCT, 1966.* (ED 083 801)

Television in Higher Education: Psychology. NCSCT, 1967.* (ED 083 801)

One Week of Educational Television, Number 4. Morse Communication Research Center, Brandeis University and National Center for School and College Television, NCSCT, 1966.* (ED 082 529)

Guidelines for Art Instruction Through Television for the Elementary Schools. NCSCT, 1967.

Television Guidelines for Early Childhood Education. NITC, 1969. (ED 040 739)

One Week of Educational Television, Number 5. National Educational Television and the National Instructional Television Center, NITC, 1969.* (ED 029-501)

Continuing Public Education Broadcasting. NITC, September 1969.* (ED 038 042)

"Ready? Set . . . Go!"—A Preliminary Evaluation. NITC, 1969.*

The Analysis of Attention to a "Ripples" Encounter. NITC, 1970.*

Report of "Ripples" Evaluation Activities to the Consortium Members. NITC, July 1970.

One Week of Educational Television, Number 6. National Instructional Television Center and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, NITC, 1971. (ED 050 572)

"Images & Things" Evaluation Report to Consortium Members. NITC, September 1971.

Cause & Affect: Summary Report to the Contemporary 11. NITC, March 1972.*

The "Inside/Out" Evaluation: The First Five Programs, Parts I and II. Bureau of Public Discussion, Indiana University, July 1972. (ED 070 250 and ED 070 251)

"Ripples" Use: A Second-Year Survey. NITC, Fall 1972.*

"Images & Things" Content Analysis. North Texas State University, 1972.*

Research Report: "Inside/Out" Teacher's Guide Survey. NITC, May 1973.*

Consortium Agency Utilization and Promotion Activities for "Inside/Out." NITC, Fall 1973.*

Decision-Oriented Research in School Television. AIT, September 1973.* (ED 082 536)

"Ripples": A Third-Year Survey. AIT, December 1973.

Research Memo: The Use of the "Inside/Out" Soundsheet. AIT, January 1974.*

Research Memo: Teachers' Opinions of "A Matter of Fact" Program Posters. AIT, August 1974.*

Report on Evaluation Activities of the "Bread & Butterflies" Project. Educational Testing Service and AIT, October 1974. (ED 097 921)

Research Memo: Television/Film Series on Essential Learning Skills. AIT, October 1974.*

Preliminary Formative Evaluation Report: "Pressure Makes Perfect." AIT, April 1975.*

Preliminary Formative Evaluation Report: "Trying Times." AIT, August 1975.*

Formative Evaluation of "Self Incorporated" Programs (Research Report Number 30). AIT, January 1976.

"Inside/Out" Teacher's Guide Survey (Research Report Number 31). February 1976.

"Bread & Butterflies" Teacher's Guide Survey (Research Report Number 32). in preparation

Technical Report: AITGRAF: The AIT Classroom Interaction Analysis Graphing Program (Research Report Number 33). in preparation